

Strategy plans for sustainable development: case studies from Denmark, Netherlands, Estonia, and Lithuania and

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to describe national plans for sustainable development and assess whether they include the necessary goals and instruments. The plans from Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia and Lithuania have been chosen as examples.

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Denmark

I. Historic background

From 1993 to November 2001 Denmark had a government lead by the socialists (in Denmark called social democrats) together with a centre party – called the SR-government (first letter from each of the parties in government). From November 2001 the government has been liberal-conservative – called the VK-government.

During the SR-government, in 1997, the parliament adopted a proposal that the state budget as well as all other proposed laws should go through a process of environmental impact assessment, EIA. After that, each year the government issued a report including such an EIA of the proposed state budget. This included for instance evaluations of

- The impact of the state budget on emission of green house gasses, air pollution like SO₂ and nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and nutrients from agriculture
- Results of the attempts of the so-called decoupling of energy consumption and green gas emissions from the economic growth, measured as GDP
- Results of the regulatory demand of a green public procurement policy.

The EIAs of other proposed laws were implemented very differently – for some laws it was done rather precise, for others only something like “no significant impacts expected” was expressed. And there are, of course, many laws that do not have significant impacts. But it is difficult to define a type of laws that could be exempted from the demand of an EIA.

The SR-government adopted a strategy plan for sustainable development in the summer 2001. The plan had to some extent goals that were quantified, and it was followed by a set of indicators. Ideas were presented, that the fulfilment of the goals should be evaluated through these indicators.

Examples of indicators:

- Emission of CO₂ and other green house gasses
- Emission of nutrients – nitrogen and phosphates from agriculture, industry and households/municipal sewage plants
- The average living age
- Number of classified chemical substances
- Green public procurement policy

An indicator like the average living age is difficult, because very many factors interfere, and according to analyses, the individual life style like food and physical exercise is more important than external environmental factors like chemicals or air pollution.

II. The strategy plan from 2002

When the new VK government took over in November 2001 it decided to stop the process making EIAs of the state budget. The EIAs of other proposed laws was not stopped, but it was given a lower priority during the new government. In the summer of 2002 the VK government replaced the 2001 strategy plan by their own plan. Most of the goals that could be quantified, were deleted, while the rest of the text was to a great extent kept unchanged. But because of the lack of quantified goals the indicators – although reports were issued for some years - were out of focus now. The indicator concerning Green public procurement policy was deleted, as the government claimed that it could not provide the data to describe this indicator. A number of the other indicators are so aggregated that they do not describe the environmental development, for instance the average living age.

A few of the quantified goals were kept, but it was stressed that it was not binding targets, but milestones, or indicative goals. Such milestones were

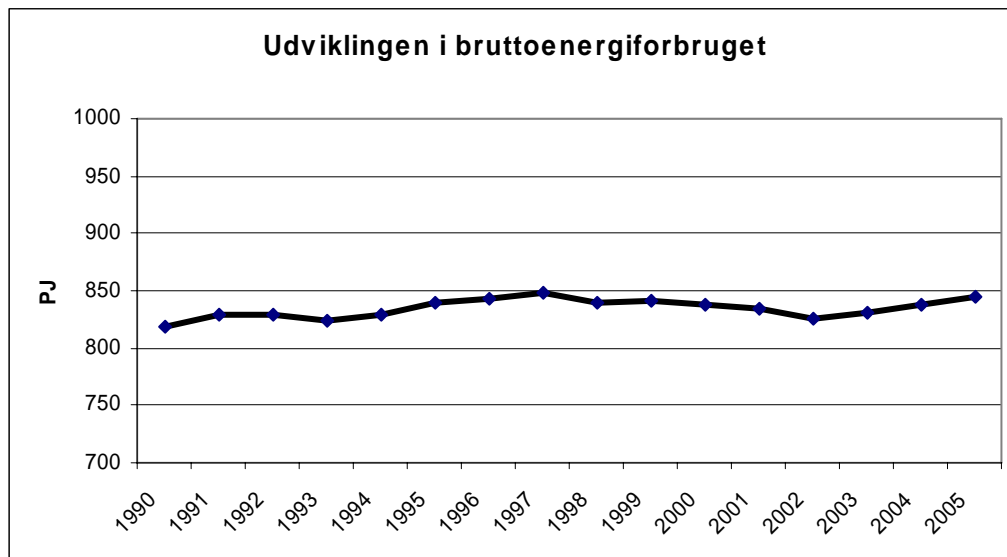
- To reduce the total Danish CO₂-emission by 50% in 2030 compared to 1990
- To reduce the CO₂-emission from transport by 25% in 2030 compared to 1988

The principle of “factor four” was also included – meaning that the use of resources on the long term should be reduced to 25% of the present level.

III. Have the previous goals been fulfilled?

Denmark has an obligation of a 21% reduction of greenhouse gasses in the period 2008-12 compared to 1990, according to the Kyoto-agreement and the mutual division of the reduction targets between the EU-countries. The government is of course working on the fulfilment of this obligation. But a hard job is still left. In the 80's and the 90's Denmark succeeded in the so-called decoupling – having economic (GDP) growth without growth in the use of fossil fuels. In the period 1997-2003 Denmark succeeded in even *reducing* the gross energy consumption, but since 2003 it has grown again, see figure 1.

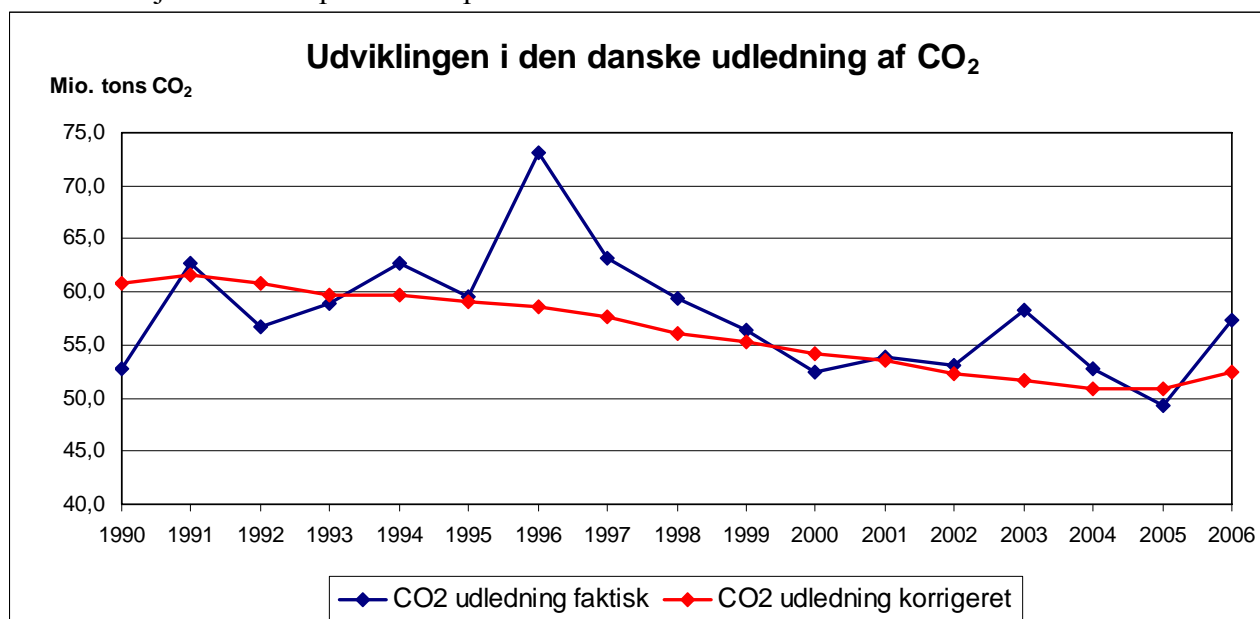
Figure 1. The gross energy consumption in Denmark 1990-2005



The same development has been seen for the CO₂-emissions, see figure 2. Denmark has a large exchange of electricity with neighbouring countries, especially Norway and Sweden. During years with much water in the rivers in Norway and Sweden, Denmark imports electricity, and during years with little water Denmark exports. Therefore Denmark normally assesses the CO₂-emission, adjusted for import and export, but according to the Kyoto- and EU-agreements it is the real emission that counts.

Figure 2: The Danish CO₂-emissions 1990-2006.

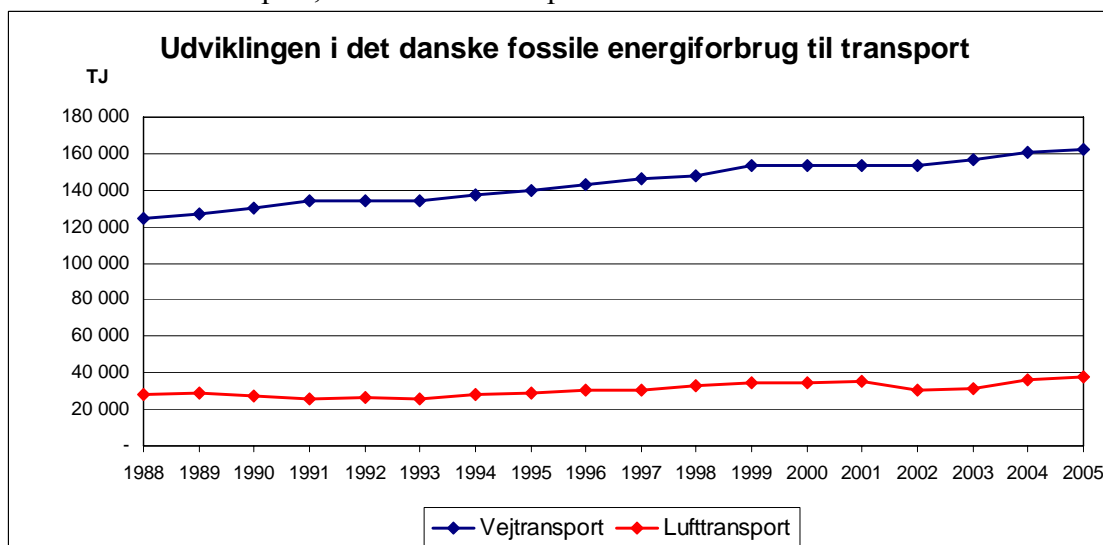
Red line: adjusted for import and export. Blue line: real emission



Concerning the special goal on transport, until now no measures have been taken to fulfil this goal – and the CO₂-emission from transport in stead has increased. The CO₂-emission follows the energy consumption for transport, see figure 3.

Figure 3: Energy consumption for road and air transport 1988-2005

Blue line: road transport, red line: air transport



IV. The democratic process

In 2007 the government have started a process of a new strategy plan that must substitute the 2002 plan. In June a draft – called “Green responsibility” - was issued for at public hearing with the deadline 14 September. In order to involve the public in this hearing 12 dialogue meetings have been organised. 6 of them were at grammar schools (gymnasium) in different parts of the country and 6 meetings with stakeholders – the finance sector, a couple of industry branches, NGOs and municipalities. The draft is on the website of the ministry of environment, and the minister invited the public to write comments on the website. Twice the minister has opened for chat about the draft, so that people could write to her, and she would answer directly on the web – one hour on June 29 and an hour and a half on September 21. But not very many participated.

The Danish Environmental and development NGOs chose to submit a common response to the hearing – and a number of them also added their own response.

The final strategy plan has still not been published. It should have been published in 2007, but it has been postponed, partly because a general election was called in October/November

V. The new government strategy plan

In the preface to the draft new plan the minister expresses that in a globalised world we have a responsibility to reduce our “global footprint”, meaning the global environmental impacts of our consumption and life style. This has been a request for many years from the NGOs. But we see few concrete goals in this direction in the draft strategy plan. For Denmark it could for instance be an assessment of whether the very large Danish production of pigs is sustainable. Around 25 million pigs are slaughtered each year – meaning that there are 12-13 million pigs in Denmark at a given time - in a country with 5.3 million inhabitants. This has large environmental impacts, not only in Denmark – concerning emission of nutrients to the aquatic environment – but also globally, as Denmark imports large amounts of feedstuff like soya beans, and part of this can be grown on former rain forest areas.

The issues of the new draft strategy are:

Climate change

Transport

Sustainable cities

A healthy and safe environment (chemicals, air pollution etc.)

Nature

Waste and resource efficiency

International co-operation and aid for developing countries

Tools/measures:

- Environment friendly technology and decoupling
- Partnership and dialogue
- Research and development
- Better decisions through economic analyses
- Strengthening of the environmental administration
- Follow-up and supervision

1. Goals

The long term goal of “factor four” is not included, as it was in the 2002 strategy, see above.

The indicative goal of 50% reduction of CO₂-emissions before 2030, which was part of the 2002 plan, is not included in the new draft. In stead the climate goals are:

- at least 30% renewable energy before 2025
- at least 1,25 reduction of the energy consumption per year

Opposite to the factor four and climate goals the indicative goal of 25% reduction of CO₂-emissions from the transport sector is repeated in the new draft.

2. Measures

In general the draft does not include any measures that can show how the goals should be fulfilled. It outlines measures that already have been taken by the government – and directives and other measures at EU-level, which have been proposed by the Commission and are supported by the Danish Government, for example the goals of 130 and 120 g CO₂ per kilometre for cars.

3. Indicators and evaluation

After the indicators had been defined in 2001 and revised in 2002, reports of the actual indicators for 2002, 2003 and 2004 have been issued, the 2004 report was issued in 2005. In 2006 an indicator report covering 2005, concerning nature and environment, was issued, but without the more broad sustainability indicators. The reports for instance show that there has been a decoupling between economic growth (GDP) and a number of environmental parameters like emission of green house gasses and nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) from agriculture. The Ministry is now working on a new indicator report that is planned to be issued in spring 2008. Also this will only cover nature and environment – not the special sustainability indicators.

VI. What should a strategy plan be like – NGO-comments and proposals

The Danish NGOs have criticized the draft strategy for not realising that Denmark today is not sustainable and for not consequently using the global approach of ecological space, meaning that each country should only use a proportional part of the global resources and emit a proportional part of the global emissions that the global ecosystem can manage – the so-called carrying capacity. The global footprint approach should be used through the entire strategy, while in the present draft it is presented in the preface, but used very little in the rest of the strategy. The goals of environmental sustainability and the fight against global poverty should be much more integrated, and the Danish aid for developing countries should be increased to 1% of GDP (as it was before 2001), while it is 0,8% today. Furthermore, financial support for climate and other environmental actions in developing countries should be additional and not taken from the money already allocated to aid.

The goal of decoupling should be defined as absolute decoupling, meaning that the use of non-renewable resources and the emissions of green house gasses and other pollution factors should be reduced in absolute terms. Relative decoupling – meaning that the use of resources and the pollution is growing at a slower speed than the economic growth (GDP) – is not enough. The goal of factor four within two to three decades should be included, and the goal of factor ten on a longer term perspective.

Concrete goals for the different sectors and environmental issues should be defined. The indicative goals from the 2002 plan mentioned above should be changed to binding goals. Effective measures should be defined that could help achieving the goals, including a green tax reform with higher tax on the use of fossil fuels and on pollution, and lower tax on labour. A new set of indicators should be established in order to make it possible to evaluate whether the goals are fulfilled.

The Netherlands

I. Historic background

In 2001 the “Fourth National Environmental Policy Plan” (NEPP4) was issued. The priority areas were: Population, knowledge, climate, water, and biodiversity. 35 indicators were presented.

After the Johannesburg-summit in 2002 “Sustainable action” was issued in 2003, which consisted of a national and an international part, see below. In a more short form the plan referred to the NEPP4. In 2004 a “Progress report” was issued, which referred to “Sustainable Action” and evaluated how far the Netherlands had come towards achieving the ambitions and implementing the actions. Neither of these reports contained indicators, and the status report does not show to which extent concrete goals have been achieved.

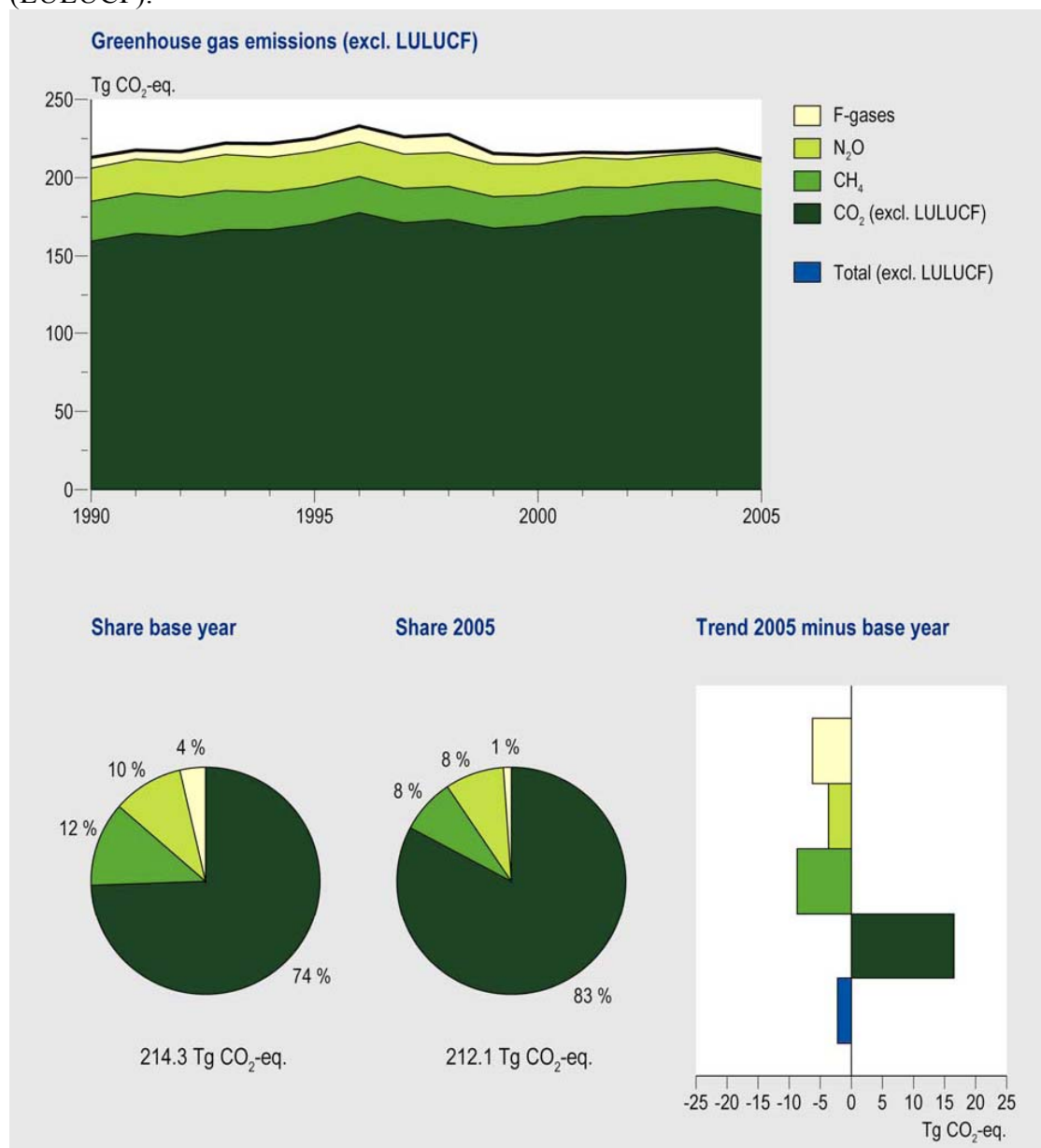
Also in 2004 the report “Quality and the future - Sustainability outlook” was presented, including a list of 32 indicators. These were different from the indicators in the 2001-plan. The Netherlands preferred to use an open set of indicator that could be changed.

There is a rather high activity in the Netherlands on the sustainable development. The government has asked for a yearly publication about the "state of the nation" with respect to sustainability. The project is very ambitious in the sense that 4 planning institutes (environmental, social, economic and spatial planning institutes) will work with Statistics Netherlands to produce a set of indicators for which historical analysis, projections and policy statements will be incorporated. The plan is to present the results at the end of 2008.

In 2006 the 'Toekomstagenda milieu' (Future agenda Environment) was presented, which is in fact the successor of the NEPP4

In 2006-07 a peer review of the Dutch SD-plans was conducted. Netherlands invited Germany, Finland and South Africa to the peer review team. In June 2007 the peer review report was issued with 46 recommendations for a new SD framework – among other things stressing the need of indicators, harmonised with the EU set of SD-indicators.

Figure 4: Emission of green house gasses from the Netherlands 1990-2005 – total and divided into CO₂, laughter gas (N₂O), methane (CH₄), and industrial green house gasses (F-gasses = HFC, PFC, and SF₆). CO₂ is calculated without Land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF).



In September 2007, the plan called 'Schoon en zuinig' (Clean and efficient) was presented. In this plan the Dutch government presents targets for 2020 on energy and climate.

Now the government is working on a more broad SD strategy, but it is not known when it will be finished - no precise data has been set up yet. But especially the 2007 plan, 'Schoon en zuinig', can be considered as the present sustainability guide of the Dutch government – but only on energy and climate.

The Dutch Kyoto obligation is to reduce by 6% in 2008-12 compared to 1990, and the Netherlands is – according to the government - well underway towards meeting the goal. The emission of CO₂ has increased, but emissions of the other green house gasses have decreased, see figure 4. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency – an independent institute – in July 2007 also concluded that the Kyoto targets will probably be met – but partly because Dutch companies will buy more CO₂-permits from other countries.

II. The strategy plan from 2003

After the Johannesburg world-summit on sustainable development in 2002 (also called Rio+10) The Netherlands issued the report “Sustainable action” consisting of two parts:

- International action that Netherlands should take to promote a sustainable development
- National action to be taken

13 top level goals were presented:

- Poverty reduction
 - Effective global governance
 - Good global financing structures and trade
 - Good water management and access to clean drinking water
 - Sustainable energy management
 - Health and safety
 - Sustainable agriculture
 - Biodiversity
 - Population – ageing and migration
 - Sustainable mobility
 - Sustainable production and consumption
 - Knowledge
- In the international strategy were also: Trade, corporate social responsibility and investment.

The report states that fundamental social changes are needed in order to obtain a sustainable development – it talks about “transition”.

The government has issued a selection of programmes – in which the state plays a clear role - for a number of sectors, in order to let these serve as models for other sectors of how sustainable development can be pursued.

A number of measures are mentioned that must be used to achieve the goals. One of these is “increasing taxes on non-environmentally friendly sources of energy” – within the framework of “internalising external costs” and the use of economic instruments, which was also recommended by the Johannesburg summit. But it also says that the main focus in the next years will be on emission trading.

The government will work on incentives to improve the environment. In this connection it has asked an institute (RIVM) to develop a method to screen subsidies for their effect on sustainable development – in order to adjust or abolish subsidies that are unfriendly to the environment.

Among the international measures is mentioned opening up western markets to agricultural goods from developing countries.

From 2003 each ministry must include a section in their budget reflecting the links sustainable development and its own policy areas.

The government provided 30 million Euro per year for the international actions, while no surplus money were provided for the national actions – these should be financed out of the ordinary budgets of the ministries.

III. The energy and climate strategy plan from 2007

In September 2007, the plan called 'Schoon en zuinig' (Clean and efficient) was presented – only with focus on climate and energy. The Dutch government realises that the present Kyoto obligations are not at all strong enough compared to the challenge of climate change. Therefore it has adopted more strict demands – in order to become one of the cleanest and most energy

efficient countries of the world. In 'Schoon en zuinig' the government presents targets for 2020, like

- reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 30% compared to 1990
- annual 2% energy efficiency improvement – compared to 1% in previous years
- 20% renewable energy in 2020.

IV. The democratic process

After the sustainable action plan was issued, each year a public debate has been initiated, and a status report been issued – starting from 2005. The debate is organised by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Development Co-operation. They invited key actors from the Dutch society. The main partners are defined as:

- Government authorities
- The private sector
- Civil society organisations
- Front runners (innovation and SD)
- The general public

V. What should a strategy plan be – NGO-comments and proposals

Stichting Natuur en Milieu – the largest environmental NGO in the Netherlands have not translated their comments to the strategy plans into English.

But the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency – an independent institute – has issued the report: Realisation of environmental targets – Progress report 2007 (12 July). The conclusion is that the Kyoto targets will probably be met – partly because Dutch companies will buy more CO₂-permits from other countries. But a number of other environmental targets will probably not be met.

Sweden

I. Historic background

Sweden's policies place a great deal of emphasis on sustainable development. Country has a longstanding history of commitment to the environment and to sustainable development issues since 1972. Already in 1994 government declared aiming at as "ecologically sustainable Sweden". Since then in Sweden there was the political belief that environmental modernization would enhance the economy.

The Swedish Parliament in 1999 has established 15 environmental quality objectives, such as "Clean air" and "Good-quality groundwater", to guide Sweden towards a sustainable society. The 15 environmental objectives functions as benchmarks for all environment-related development in Sweden, regardless of where it is implemented and by whom. The overriding aim is to solve all the major environmental problems within one generation.

Environmental Objectives Council, comprising government agencies and (some) stakeholders, was established to annually monitor and report on overall progress towards the objectives. The first report was published in 2002.

Many of those initiatives undertaken in the country were assembled in the Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Development.

II. The strategy plans from 2002 and 2004: process and content

Sustainable development became the overall objective of the Government's policy since the Communication A National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) was presented in 2002. This was the first time the Government has presented a strategy for sustainable development that brings together the social, cultural, economic and environmental priorities in the shift to more sustainable development in Sweden. It is based on objectives, measures and strategies that have already been adopted and are reflected in this policy.

The national strategy served two purposes: to meet the commitment made by all UN Member States to have drafted national strategies for sustainable development in preparation for the World Summit in Johannesburg in South Africa in 2002 and to describe the current situation and a vision of the future as regards sustainable development in Sweden.

National Strategy for Sustainable Development of 2002 selected eight core areas from the relevant policy fields, covering the three dimensions: the future environment (repeating the previous environmental quality objectives); limitation of climate change (emphasising the climate change target; some overlap with the environment chapter); population and public health (later on, more concrete objectives were developed in this area); social cohesion, welfare and security; employment and learning in a knowledge society; economic growth and competitiveness; regional development and cohesion; community development.

The strategy defined the long-term vision and foundation of values and specifies the policy instruments, tools and processes that are necessary to implement the change process. Ambitious goals of the strategy demonstrated the willingness of the Sweden to be seen as a driving-force and taking global responsibility and being a role model for developing countries.

Sweden's national sustainable development strategy was presented to Parliament in March 2002. Consultations on the strategy with various groups continued till the end of 2002. Both the results of the consultations and the conclusions of the summit were summarized in the first revision of the strategy carried out in 2003.

The SDS revision 2004 identified four strategic issues (from within the previous eight core areas, which are kept):

- Environmentally driven growth and welfare (with energy as a key area);
- Good health (as the “most important future resource”);
- Coherent policies for sustainable community planning;
- Child and youth policies for an ageing society.

The revised document stressed the commitments of the 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg concerning consumption and production patterns. The communication was also a response to a new Swedish policy for equitable and sustainable global development, which extended the objective of promoting equitable and sustainable global development to all policy areas.

The following NSSD revision in 2006 took into account new legal acts, issued in Sweden, new proposals and follow-ups of the reports. A set of indicators for sustainable development, including 12 headline indicators, was put together with the assistance of Statistics Sweden.

Sweden’s approach towards a SD strategy can be defined as “a balanced mixture of planning, in terms of targets and timetables, and flexibility, in terms of SDS as “living document” Also, a link to actions is in place, at least for the 15 Environmental Quality Objectives for 2020, with underpinning interim targets and actions ¹..

III Implementation

The task of implementing the strategy of 2002 was a responsibility of the Government Office as a whole. A special office to coordinate and strengthen the national efforts has been set up. The new Environment Minister in place from 2002 strongly supported the idea of installing a coordination unit in the PM office for coordinating SD efforts in the government offices, bringing forward SD goals in Ministries, and leading the work of further developing the national strategy; the link to the other levels and actors is implied, as the unit is available for presenting the SDS and government activities to e.g. the local level and business; functioning as a think-tank; developing Sweden’s action in sustainability issues internationally. This unit started its work in May 2004: PM’s senior staff are seconded from Ministries concerned, with a background in coordination tasks.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development was established on 1 January 2005, and the Unit for Sustainable Development was moved to the new ministry. The mission of the unit is to oversee interministerial coordination of the sustainable development effort, as well as to generate ideas and act as a catalyst in the national and international effort. In early 2005, the Government established a Council for Sustainable Development under the National Board of Building, Planning and Housing. The mission of the council is to facilitate the implementation of Sweden's strategy for sustainable development, particularly at the local and regional levels.

IV. The democratic process

Sweden has a strong tradition in broad consultation and for SDS was established a preparatory committee comprising MPs of all political parties, and stakeholders as experts to held the consultation on the SDS 2002 and its revision 2004.

¹ Sustaining Sustainability a benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states, EEAC, 2005

The SDS of 2004 was prepared by an inter-departmental working group, led by the Ministry of Environment, which also conducted around 10 conferences/workshops in the regions that included a broader stakeholder involvement. The secretariat of the National Committee on Agenda 21 and Habitat cooperated in the preparation and conduct of the regional workshops.

The NGOs (environment and development) are rich in members, well organized on national, regional and local levels, and some receive government funds (e.g. for organising projects in developing countries). One of the three larger ones also has strong standing rights. The Trade Union confederation is traditionally involved and plays an active role in policy formulation and commenting. There are difficulties though in making their affiliates aware of SD as an important policy approach, and its overarching character.

The Government Offices and the Council for Sustainable Development co-organised an initial consultation in January 2006 with local, regional and other key participants. The purpose of the consultation was to provide information concerning the overall effort to further elaborate the strategy, obtain viewpoints about that effort and initiate a dialogue on cooperative implementation of the strategy. Memoranda from that meeting are available on the website of the Council for Sustainable Development. Revisions and follow-ups to the strategy will be submitted on a regular basis. The follow-ups will include the 99 measures presented in the strategy. The Government plans to revise the strategy in 2010.

Despite the generally open policy style, sometimes, as in the case of the SDS, consultation is considered as too short in time and/or too passive: it is e.g. criticised that the revision of the SDS was not well announced, consultation took place only via the internet, and no feed-back was given.

V. Indicators and evaluation

The first progress report 2002 on the 15 environmental quality objectives uses several indicators per objective, and there are several indicators to follow up on the 71 sub-targets for 2010.⁷ So far there has been no aim to reduce to one indicator per objective, but an ongoing discussion on a set of fewer indicators. A systematic review process takes place for these 15 objectives, also using the 'traffic light' method.

In 2001 a first set of 30 SD indicators was published, but these were not linked to the objectives of the SDS 2002 and not used for the revision.

A set of 87 indicators for sustainable development has been developed on the basis of work by Statistics Sweden. A broad range of agencies and experts has been consulted. Twelve indicators have been selected as headline indicators.

In 2006 the Government presented a progress report of NSSD by means of 12 headline indicators. The list of headline indicators does not claim to measure the sustainability of trends in Sweden or to do full justice to all components of the concept of sustainable development. The indicators are broken down into six areas: health, sustainable consumption and production patterns, economic development, social cohesion, environment and climate, and global development. The 12 headline indicators and the main trend that each of them reflects.

Successes of the first phase (without an SDS in place) 1995–2001 are:

- 15 environmental quality objectives in place;
- CO₂ objective for 2012 stricter than the burden sharing agreement, and a long-term CO₂ objective (2050);
- Key ecological indicators to be included in the finance plan;

- Significant progress in decoupling.

Shortcomings:

No particular one is identified, besides the SDS being so far too “bureaucratic” and government centred, and that the method and length of consultation was not sufficient.².

² Sustaining Sustainability a benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states, EEAC, 2005

Estonia

I. Historic background

Since the Rio Conference, where Estonia took an obligation to follow the principle of sustainable development, the country has adopted a number of legal acts, strategies and action plans supporting SD.

At the beginning of 1995, the Estonian Parliament adopted an Act on Sustainable Development. The Act establishes the principles of the national strategy for sustainable development. It was amended in 1997 to stipulate that long-term plans for SD are to be made for a number of specific sectors, such as energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, tourism, the chemical industry, the building materials industry and the food industry.

The Estonian Commission on Sustainable Development (ECSD) was established by the Estonian Government Decree in 1996. Members of the ECSD were appointed by the institutional affiliation (Government, Parliament, Academia, NGO, Business, Government institutions) and approved by the Government.

SD principles are also deeply rooted into environmental policy making. In 1997, the Estonian Parliament accepted the National Environmental Strategy (NES), which establishes a priority ranking of environmental problems and objectives for Estonia. It sets the goals to be achieved by 2000 and 2010 respectively. For attaining these objectives an Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) was approved in 1998. 2001 saw the adoption of a revised National Environmental Action Plan for 2001-2003, which attaches a high priority to both accession to the European Union and implementation of the principles of SD.

II The strategy plan from 2005

The Estonian SDS was initiated by the Government in 2001 and approved by Parliament in 2005. "Sustainable Estonia 21" (SE21) is a strategy for the development of the Estonian state and society until 2030. The long-term objectives of development determined in the strategy are: vitality of the Estonian cultural sphere (maintaining national traditions), greater well-being, coherent society (without sharp social conflicts) and ecological balance. Knowledge-based society is a type of comprehensive social order marked by a new operating and decision-making culture in which the achievement of commonly set and accepted objectives is based mainly on knowledge and analysis. It was being prepared on the basis of the 'Capacity 21' project (1997-2001) between the UNDP and the Estonian Government for capacity building and awareness rising for SD on all levels of government and society. The preparation of the strategy was coordinated by a consortium lead by the Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU) and academic and business sector representatives. It was an extensive and open process during which all materials were available for commenting to all interested parties at the Ministry Internet address under the heading Sustainable Development/ Estonia.

III. Implementation

"Sustainable Estonia 21" (SE21) is a strategy for the development of the Estonian state and society until 2030. The main task of the strategy is to answer the question of what should be done to ensure successful functioning of the Estonian society and state also in the longer term.

The strategy creates the general framework for interconnecting the social, economic and environmental spheres in terms of long-term development of the society and defines the general objective of development for Estonia as movement towards the so-called knowledge-based society.

The long-term objectives of development determined in the strategy are: vitality of the Estonian cultural sphere (maintaining national traditions), greater well-being, coherent society (without sharp social conflicts) and ecological balance. Knowledge-based society is a type of comprehensive social order marked by a new operating and decision-making culture in which the achievement of commonly set and accepted objectives is based mainly on knowledge and analysis.

The Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development presents four major priorities. Those major priorities and their operational objectives are as follows.

- Viability of the Estonian cultural space
- Growth of welfare
- Coherent society
- Ecological balance

Sustainability of the Estonian nation and culture constitutes the cornerstone of sustainable development of Estonia. The persistence of Estonianhood is the highest priority among the development goals of Estonia.

The above-described four development goals are not unique in the context of the sustainable development strategies prepared in other countries. The goal of ecological balance with its various components is part of all strategies drawn up to date. Growth of welfare and social coherence are set as goals in the strategies of many countries (United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Netherlands), while persistence of the cultural space as a separate goal is a relatively specific aspect in SE21.

The strategy of sustainable development covers many different themes and different ministries are responsible for its implementation. Achieving the objectives of the strategy is also closely connected to matters of competitiveness and to the coordination of the implementation of the Estonian Action Plan for Growth and Jobs 2005-2007 that has been developed to increase the competitiveness of the state. Therefore, the government decided in June 2006 that the coordination of the implementation of the strategy on sustainable development would be the duty of the State Chancellery. In the State Chancellery the position of the Strategy Director was created to coordinate the development and implementation of the government's action programmes, the competitiveness strategy and the sustainable development strategy. In addition, the Strategy Director ensures that the goals of the sector development plans accord with the principal objectives and priorities of the Government, and acts as the Prime Minister's advisor on such matters. The Strategy Director was appointed the national coordinator of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and the national coordinator (or focal point) on matters of sustainable development. To support the Strategy Director in the execution of these tasks, the Strategy Office was created. The fact that the coordination of the implementation of the strategy on sustainable development was brought into the State Chancellery has ensured a more efficient application of the strategy. The coordination system created helps to ensure that the goals of the competitiveness strategy and the sustainable development strategy coincide, and that the goals of the sustainable development strategy are included in the other sector development plans and further that the monitoring of putting the measures into practice is efficient. To improve the efficiency of the implementation, an inter-ministerial working group for sustainable development was also created.

IV The democratic process

The ESDS was developed in a participatory process involving stakeholders from all levels and fields of the society. The Act on SD from 1995 regulates this participation.

The Estonian Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD) is the most instrumental institution in the preparation of the ESDS. This advisory body - established in 1996 - is lead by the Prime Minister and co-chaired by the Minister of Economy and the Minister of the Environment. The Commission advises the Government on issues related to SD, develops different sectoral options and comments, submits them to the national and local governments, and submits proposals for new legislation. According to the areas of activity, 28 experts in the field of SD representing different institutions have been elected members of the Commission. These include people from government, parliament, government institutions, the academic field, business and NGO's. The ECSD has prepared a SD report in 2002 that provided an input to the drafting of the ESDS. Stakeholders were also consulted in the drafting of the NES and the NEAP through a series of opened forums. These included participants from the Ministry of the Environment, regional environmental authorities, other Ministries, local authorities, the science community, businesses, NGO's, Estonian and foreign consultants, consumer organisations, Parliament and the media.

SE21 was drawn up mainly by means of expert assessments based on studies conducted and data gathered earlier in the relevant fields. As set out in the Terms of Reference, the preparation of SE21 did not involve the conduct of new studies. SE21 was prepared by five working groups with the participation of over 50 experts of different spheres of life. In parallel with the work of expert groups, the key aspects of the strategy were discussed with social partners, stakeholders and the public. In total, 32 seminars, round tables and discussion events were held with various partners from outside the expert groups. Many of the ideas suggested during the discussions have been incorporated into this document.

V. Indicators and evaluation

The Estonian NSDS from 2005 includes a set of 42 preliminary indicators linked to the goals of the strategy. There is work in progress to elaborate a set of indicators for the NSDS.

In 2004 and 2006, the Statistical Office of Estonia has prepared the report 'Indicators for Sustainable Development' based on a set of 60 indicators. Based on this SDI set, the Estonian Statistical Office also hosts a "Dashboard of Sustainability" that displays a core set of sustainability indicators for European countries and the regions/counties of Estonia on maps as well as the performance evaluation of countries/regions/counties.

The report on implementation of NDDS is going to be prepared by the end of 2007.

Lithuania

I Historic background

Already in 1992 Lithuanian Government representatives took part in the United Nations conference on Environment and Development and, by signing its documents, they declared for the way of sustainable development. The first Lithuanian National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD) was established and approved by the Government in 2000. The Lithuanian NCSD consisted of 34 members mostly representing governmental institutions, scientific community also NGOs, local authorities, trade, industry and business and was headed by Prime Minister. That period lacks documentation on events, meetings and discussions and it can be stated that NCSD was not operational until 2002.

The main driver to renew the NCSD activities was the international responsibility to report to the United Nations World Summit meeting in Johannesburg. The National Report on sustainable development was elaborated by the group of more than 40 governmental officials, scientists and NGO. It presents an analysis of 4 sectors of SD and also analyses regional development.

The first Lithuanian national sustainable development strategy (NSDS) was adopted by the Government in 2003 with a time horizon for its implementation by 2020. The strategy is based on the overview of 3 sectors of SD and also analyses regional development issues separately. The implementation of the strategy is monitored using a set of 75 indicators. These indicators are grouped according to the three pillars of SD: 'environmental quality', 'economic development' and 'social development'. The indicators are also published in the Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania of 2004.

The Ministry of Environment was assigned as an institution responsible for coordination of implementation of the SD strategy. It was specified that biannual reports on implementation of that Strategy must be prepared as well as submitted to the National Commission of Sustainable Development and institutions concerned. The reports must also be made available to the public. The first biannual Report on Implementation of National Strategy for Sustainable Development that analyses changes that have taken place in different environmental, economical, and social sectors has been prepared in 2005.

II. The strategy plan from 2003

Lithuanian national SD strategy was adopted by the Government in 2003 specified as the main objective of SD policy to achieve the developmental level of EU countries of 2003 by 2020, according to indicators of economic and social development as well as the efficiency in consumption of resources, and not to exceed allowable EU standards, according to indicators of environmental pollution, while meeting the requirements of international conventions in the field of minimization of environmental pollution and input into global climate change. To achieve this, special emphasis is put on scientific research and on the implementation of environmental technologies. The NSDS contains a very detailed list of SD objectives for each of the three dimensions of SD as well as for regional development. Within each dimension, they are further broken down by issue or sector and divided into short-term (by 2005), medium term (by 2010) and long-term objectives (by 2020). For each issue or sectors, tasks and implementation measures are specified. 16 priority areas with objectives and actions and 11 additional main objectives are defined in the Lithuanian NSDS. It describes 610 measures for the implementation of the strategy. The main axes of the strategy and proposed objectives/actions are the following: Environmental quality and natural resources, Economic Development, Social issues and Regional Development and they are listed in separate sectors.

Most of the goals and priorities of NSDS are inspired by EU policies. As a result in the cross-country comparison of SD objectives in Europe³ it is obvious that in Lithuanian NSDS between 1/3 to 2/3 of objectives and actions correspond to EU SDS key challenges and cross cutting policies. More than 2/3 of the objectives addresses education and training sectors objectives and actions. Less than 1/3 of the objectives and actions specified under the key challenge “sustainable consumption and production” as well as the cross cutting issue “communication, mobilising actors and multiplying success” are addressed in Lithuanian NSDS. Such issues as “global poverty and SD challenges”, “financing and economic instruments” are not addressed in Lithuanian SD Strategy of 2003. Some controversial topics such as health care, social marketing, migration, land use in protected areas, GMO are completely eliminated from the text of NSDS of Lithuania. In the first strategy of SD.

Lithuania’s objective is to reach the average of per-capita GDP of the 2003 EU Member States by 2020. According to the “middle” scenario of the Long-term Economic Development Strategy, this implies an annual growth rate of 5- 6%. In comparison to the environmental impacts of a scenario with higher growth rates, this middle scenario is considered in line with SD objectives. The strategy is basically concentrating on national political boundaries and there is missing clear delegation to increase the development cooperation with third worlds and neighbouring countries.

III. Implementation

First report on implementation of National strategy on sustainable development of 2003 –2004 has stated that despite rapid growth of the Lithuanian economy in recent years, the air emissions of major pollutants are not increasing or are increasing much slower than the production does. After increase of the country’s GDP by 18.2 percent during the Strategy’s implementation period in question (2003 – 2004), the total amount of air emissions of pollutants increased just by 5.1 percent, that is, it was increasing 3.5 times slower than the Lithuanian GDP. The aim of the National Strategy of Sustainable Development – achievement that air emissions of greenhouse gas would increase half as slow as production and services – is unattainable at the moment due to insufficient reforms of the energy sector.

Because of foresting unproductive land and because of self-reforestation in 2003- 2004, the area of Lithuanian forests has increased by 0.7 percent (45.9 thousand ha) Though also, one may observe very intense invasion by legal and illegal constructions into the protected territories While creating the ecological network of “Natura 2000” territories, the area of protected territories has increased by 2.3 percent Unfortunately no funds are allocated to and recultivation of neglected territories (neglected quarries, dumping grounds) is almost stopped. Works of inventory and legalization of planted areas of urbanized territories as well as other territories of ecological and recreational value are slow. As constructions are intensifying, a threat of destruction of such territories increases

While in recent years the economy was rapidly growing, consumption of energy resources and environmental pollution was increasing much slower. Although accelerated increase of energy consumption has been observed since 2003, during 2004 –2005, the GDP increased by 18.2 percent, while energy consumption increased by 10.7 percent, that is, almost half as much as the GDP. Such growth complies in fact with the strategic tasks in the field of ecological efficiency. Air emissions of pollutants for a unit of consumed energy are twice as big as the ones of the old countries of the EU.

³ Objectives and Indicators of Sustainable Development in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of European Coherence , 2007; <http://www.sd-network.eu/?k=quarterly%20reports>

Air emissions of greenhouse gas and some other polluting substances are increasing quite rapidly. During the last two years, air emissions of nitrogen oxides have increased by 26 percent and particulates matter – by 33 percent. Air emissions were increasing at the same speed or even faster (particulates matter) than the GDP created in the industrial sector.

IV. The democratic process

Participation of different social groups is stated as one of the key principles for the implementation of the NSDS. Basically it was only the preparatory group that have been actively contributing to the development of SD strategy. Public hearings were organized formally. The developed and approved strategy was introduced to the stakeholders in the format of the lecture, discussions were not facilitated. During the SD review process there was an event held where again the status quo was presented and there was very little space left for constructive discussion.

V. Indicators and evaluation

The Ministry of Environment was assigned as an institution responsible for coordination of implementation of the SD strategy. It was specified that biannual reports on implementation of that Strategy must be prepared as well as submitted to the National Commission of Sustainable Development and institutions concerned.

The Ministry of the Environment is responsible to co-ordinate the implementation of the NSDS while the other Ministries are called upon to revise their national programmes.

The Environment Ministry has to establish a review panel in 2007. It is a specific expert group of 17 experts that had a task to analyse social, economic and environmental changes and progress on implementing the NSDS as well as to prepare recommendations on how to overcome problems, so as to adjust the implementation in a flexible way according to changing circumstances. Implementation is to be financed primarily by the budgets of each ministry as well as by the Public Investment Programme.

The proposed changes are more cosmetic, several topics such as corporate social responsibility, sustainable production and consumption, development cooperation are introduced and the number of indicators increased to 91. The renewed strategy is going to be adopted in December 2007.

Annex: Energy and climate figures for the countries involved

In 2007 Eurostat has issued a report written by two universities in Vienna – Improvement of the quality of the structural and sustainable development indicators. The report evaluates and compares the SD-plans (and National Reform Plans in the Lisbon strategy) between the member states.

	RE part of el. cons. 2003, %	RE part of el. cons. 2010 (goal)	Reduction goal, %, CHG 2008-12	t CO ₂ per capita
Sweden	40.0	60.0	+ 4	6.2
Denmark	23.3	29.0	- 21	10.1
Netherlands	4.7	9.0	- 6	11.2
Estonia	0.4	5.1	- 8	12.5
Latvia	35.2	49.3	- 8	3.3
Lithuania	2.7	7.0	- 8	3.8
EU average			- 8	

RE= renewable energy

El.cons.= electricity consumption

CHG=green house gasses